

Distinguished guests, VEF Fellows and Visiting Scholars, Ladies and gentlemen,  
We have been working very effectively over the last 3 days.

In my opinion, the success of the “All the Ways Home” is that this initiative is an exercise demonstrating that you-- our Fellows and Scholars—although you are different from each other, but together you can make a difference. You have successfully established working groups to take your destiny in your hands. This is a great achievement because you have already engaged in a win-win situation. I give you a very hearty “Congratulations”!

Now you are all looking toward the same direction: your future in Vietnam. I hope that you take this initiative not as a one-time exercise anymore, but as a regular approach to building your dreams, to transforming them into your vision, and to making your vision a reality.

As for your work for “All the Ways Home,” you have established a solid stepping stone which is important not only for you, but is also important for Vietnamese in programs other than VEF, to help them return to Vietnam. Therefore, continue to refine your ideas among yourselves. VEF staff and me, are working with experts in education field to support you.

As you know, VEF is a small and young organization. Therefore, we must be pioneers, who establish models that work reliably, that have the highest quality, and that can be replicated by others on a larger scale. We have to make VEF a trademark of quality.

With your acquired experiences, we are confident that-- thanks to you-- the U.S. academic community will look at Vietnamese applicants with confidence and see them as a symbol of quality, of dedication, of success, and of mutual benefit. And also thanks to you, we are confident not only that Vietnam knows more about how to prepare their candidates to study abroad and to prepare for their return to Vietnam, but we are also confident that the Vietnamese community will look at the relationship between the U.S. and Vietnam as a steadily growing and long-lasting collaboration to help put Vietnam solidly on the world map of science and technology.

In looking to the future, I see other roles that you can play. Here are some examples. You can contribute to the Vietnam OpenCourseware project –VOCW--

by publishing in its repository all your academic documents, such as assignments, courses, project reports, and your theses.

You can bring back to Vietnam more than your diploma by establishing a network of your thesis mentors and classmates. Convince this important network that Vietnam is a dynamic country, and promote joint research projects as well as teaching programs between them and Vietnamese institutions.

Also, although Vietnam needs traditional technologies to build up its infrastructure, you must show that Vietnam must also invest in emerging technologies and science to have a chance to catch up rapidly with the rest of the world and eventually to become a great contributor.

Furthermore, instead of the traditional out-of-date hierarchy of Si, Nong, Cong, Thuong (Intelligentsia, Farmers, Workers, and Businessmen), that is the business has the lowest consideration in the hierarchy in the society, you must show that today Entrepreneurship must be in tandem with research and education to sustain science and technology. By the same token, engineering management is another important field in which you can help VN.

As you know that higher education is the first priority of the Vietnamese government, hence, more than ever great opportunities in this arena are here now. Don't wait too long. Remember the Vietnamese saying: "Trau Cham Uong nuoc Duc". We have built the bridge; you must build a beautiful city to attract people on the other side to cross the bridge.

Regarding the Academic Job Fair, in my opinion, its success is seen in the enthusiastic response of the Vietnamese institutions as is evident from the presence of you, the Vietnamese delegations. We truly appreciate your trust in helping VEF in the preparation of the return of our Fellows to Vietnam. Your openness has made us understand better your vision and your plans in the development in science and technology in Vietnam through research and education. Your messages will be used as the concrete guidelines for our Fellows to shape their future. We hope that you continue to maintain connections with our Fellows and put in practice what you have discussed. Please feel free to email me all of your new ideas and suggestions. We hope that your positive contributions during this annual VEF conference will help all of us move toward the next level of excellence.

In looking to the future, I think that Vietnam needs to establish independent science and technology Think-Tanks. These will create standards of excellence as well as establish the directions for scientific research that fits with the real needs of Vietnam and international scientific norms. Along those lines, I look forward to learning more about the Institute of Development Studies, Viện Nghiên cứu phát triển. It was created a couple of weeks ago in Hanoi. I am intrigued with its potential.

In more practical terms, I think that Vietnam seriously needs to look into the existing models of excellence, such as the U.S. National Academies, the National Science Foundation, and the Institutes of Health, in order to build its own institutions. VEF would be happy to collaborate with you, Academic Job Fair delegations, and the Vietnamese authorities on such developments.

Back to internal affairs of VEF, VEFFA, our VEF Fellows Association, has elected its new Board of Representatives. I would like to welcome the new officers and thank the past ones for their efforts and contributions. Our past VEFFA officers, please stand. We commend all the initiatives that these leaders have taken. On behalf of VEF and the National Academies staff, I would like to express our sincere thanks to our past VEFFA leaders. They helped to make this Conference a great success, most particularly in organizing all social events. Let's recognize their outstanding leadership! [Please be seated]. Over the years, VEF and the National Academies staff have developed a solid template for the Annual Conference. With our vocation of education, we are transferring little by little this organizational experience to the VEFFA Board of Representatives because we think that the task of organizing conferences is knowledge that our Fellows must acquire. We hope that the next Conference will have even more contributions from the VEFFA Board of Representatives. Now, our new VEFFA officers, please stand. We honor your volunteerism and leadership. [Please sit down.]

Before declaring the closing of the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual VEF Fellows and Scholars Conference, I would like to thank the Board of Directors of VEF for their continuous and valuable support of our efforts.

On behalf of the VEF staff, I would like to thank the National Academies and its staff for their collaborations. [NA staff please stand. Please be seated]. Collaborations such as these with leading organizations in science and technology are vital for the growth of VEF.

Finally, I would like to thank all the staff of VEF for their crucial contributions to the good of our Fellows and Scholars and to the success of the diverse programs that we have embarked upon. [VEF staff please stand. Applaud and pause.]

Ladies and gentlemen, the end of one event is, of course, the beginning of many others. Before we meet you at next year's Annual Conference, which will be held during this same time period in 2009, we hope to see you at other events, such as the VEF Alumni Conference and other activities to mark our 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and to help our Fundraising Campaign.

Thank you, everyone, for your attention and your contributions. May your experiences at this conference continue to motivate and empower you to be the best and to do the most for your country and its relationship with the United States. So long, and safe travels!